1: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala MD4

race or my creed amongst the Arabs. I was never once the butt of their mockery or suffered at their hands any discourtesy. 123 114

The reason that I was allowed to live with them on the most intimate terms and was implicitly trusted by them may perhaps be explained by the simple fact that I refrained from mingling in their politics, except when invited to give my opinion in internal tribal affairs. Furthermore, I was careful to adhere to all their cherished customs and prejudices, particularly those relating to their women. These are strict, and no European can hope to gain the complete confidence of a Bedouin without studied observance of them.

Like the desert itself, the Bedouins, looked upon from the outside, have a forbidding appearance; but the closer one lives to them, the better one comes to know them and is the more astonished at their placid unconcern. 181

The most astounding thing, which will ever command my admiration, is the equanimity with which the Bedouin leads his family and his herds from the oases and cultivated lands into the wilderness and across desert areas, which appear to be absolutely barren. The first cloud proclaiming the advent of rain lures him irresistibly to the highlands of the Hamad and the flint desert or into the sand dunes of the Nufud. After the first rains the bold camel-plunderers also leave their tents. With their war-mares tied to their racing camels, they ride out into the blue, often covering a thousand miles, "and sit on the roads (as the holy script says) and lie in wait for booty like an Arab in the desert. . . ."

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643 still living at the time of my last stay with the Ruala, had died.

353 Nuri was very astonished, but very happy, to see me again, well and in high spirits. He led me to his private room, which he had furnished according to his Bedouin taste. It was just like the interior of a Bedouin tent, with its coffee-hearth, its heap of white ashes, its mattresses and a profusion of cushions, which, propped against camel-saddles, were a positive incentive to indolence.

231 A broad-shouldered hunting-falcon stood on a foot-high perch, one powerful talon hidden under its plumage, ready to strike. Nuri removed its leather hood. Great black eyes glared at us and the bird crooned. Then old Nuri called for a pigeon and threw it into the air. With a movement swift as lightning, too swift for the eye to follow, the falcon pounced upon its prey and ripped it open.

●181 157 Cruelty is inseparable from the Bedouin. He enjoys seeing blood flow. Old Nuri seemed to renew his youthful ardour as he played thus with his falcon. In this world the strong do not always fight with the strong; the weak are so often victims of sheer brutality. In Arabia, in particular, this can never be forgotten.

619 628 A week later I resumed my journey. Nuri had given me, as travelling companion and guard, Faris ibn Naif es-Sa'bi, a young Shammar Bedouin, so that I might make my way unmolested to the old chief's great tribe in the neighbourhood of Wadi Sirhan and the red sand of the far-off Nufud desert.

It was curious that a Shammar should act as my conductor to the Ruala, for these tribes have been bitter,

l: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala MD4

VIII

Panther and Ostrich

SEVERAL DAYS WERE spent by us among the volcanic table-mountains of the Jabal Tubayk. Precipitous cliffs, riven and pinnacled rocks rise some six hundred feet from flower-sprinkled level pastures and valleys strewn with black lava boulders. It is a country of savage beauty, in which gazelles and game birds are numerous.

There Faris and I, out after game, chanced to come on three tents tucked away in a hollow. They belonged to members of that curious folk, the Sulkan (singular: Sleyb)—nomadic hunters and handicraftsmen. In the popular sense they resemble the gypsies. Like them they doctor man and beast, love music, are fortune-tellers, and have a weakness for things occult and superstitious.

As hunters, trackers and scouts the Sulkan surpass the other Bedouins, and they know the desert better than any other nomads. Many a secluded water-hole is known only to them. Their origin is a mystery. They are few in number, but are held together by some sort of tribal organization, under a chief; and they pay tribute—"protection money"—to the Ruala and other Bedouin tribes. In return, each of these appoints from among its own tribesmen a "Brother" to the Sulkan, charged with looking after their interests.

The Chief of the Sulkan was then one Ralib welde Tulihan, and it was to this young man that the little camp we had discovered belonged. Ralib, accompanied

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224 of the hunting trophies; and several injured greyhounds into the bargain.

825 554 Noticing on Amir Fuaz's *abs* droppings of his falcon, I attempted to brush it off, but the young Prince stopped me and said proudly: "No—no, Aziz! The excrement of the noble falcons stamps us with the hallmark of noble birth."

224 ●181 His words explained better than any conception of mine the true inwardness of these hunts; they are considered noble and honourable. The nobility of the desert (its "large-eyedness" as the Bedouins call it) must be experienced and tested; but noble and large-eyed as the Bedouins are, so are also their horses, camels, greyhounds, and falcons, and no less the Bedouin's prey—gazelles, antelopes, and ostriches.

But the ignoble man or beast the wandering Arab despises. He holds them beyond the pale, beyond the law of the desert . . .

". . . die that they might have new life;
For only what is weakling dies,
That what is strong may live."

2:Musil S-4, 5 (no date) 1928 MD4 Rwala MD4

302 thus plaited and dressing with some taste, *walad jenṣob*, is
305 called a *ǧâhel*. In the case of men not wearing plaits the barber cuts the hair, *šûše*. His work finished, the barber salutes the shaven one with the words: "May'st thou preserve thy health and capture camels! *eslam w-eṛnam al-bel*." The answer is: "May Allâh reward thee! *âǧerak ʿal-allâh*," the barber adding: "May Allâh receive thee into his mercy! *sâmaḥk allâh*." The common barber is nearly always an independent, *ḥorr*, Bedouin. He shaves for a good word, not for pay, and must, therefore, be thanked, for nothing is more disagreeable to an independent Bedouin than discourtesy and ingratitude for favors or services rendered; therefore the saying: "Bitter is the fatigue of a free Bedouin, *taʿab al-ḥorr murr*."

[576 181]

Long plaits are the pride of a childishly vain Bedouin, *ǧâhel*, and often lead to his undoing. When pursued, he can be easily captured if the enemy catches hold of his plaits. For not only is he unable to escape, but his enemies can bind his hands behind his neck with his own hair and, besides, tie one or two plaits around his leg above the ankle. Hence the saying: "Thy hair is thy snare, *râsak ʿarâṣak*." Mindîl al-Ḳaṭʿi, my companion, told me that he was once caught by some men of the Tûmân clan of the Šammar tribe, whose camel he had tried to steal, and was bound by his own plaits. When they dismissed him the next day, they cut the plaits through. From that time Mindîl has worn his hair short, *šûše*.

302 685 When the Bedouin catches a thief, whether afoot (*ḥâjef*) or mounted (*muʿajjer*), from a tribe with which he is at war, *kowmâni*, he cuts off a piece of his plait, accompanying his action with the words: "I let thee go free for Allâh's sake, *ana muʿtežk lillâh*," and adds: "If I catch thee again, I surely will cut off thy chin beard; *in ḳaẓabtak laḳoṣṣ laḥîtak*." To cut a man's chin beard is, in the popular idea, as bad as cutting off his head, *laḳṭaʿ râsak*. It is much easier for the relatives of a murdered man to forgive the slayer than for the kinsmen of a Bedouin insulted by having his beard cut off to be reconciled with the culprit. Sâbel an-Nuṣejri of the Rwala once went to the Beni Ṣaḫr tribe to seek his two she-camels which had been stolen from him, *naḳiṣa*, some time before. He bore a letter of recommendation for the chief, given him by Prince Saṭṭâm, who asked the chief either to return to Sâbel his animals or to see to it that he

302 628

2:Musil S-4, 5 (no date) 1928 MD4 Rwala MD4

538 any. He usually recites from six to ten verses and then says that perhaps someone else knows the rest. Hence, since every long poem must be collected piecemeal from a number of men, the order of the individual verses can seldom be accurately established. If two Bedouins know the same verses of the same poem, they never recite them in exactly the same way but change the original words and often whole verses. Sometimes these changes are due to later improvements by the poet himself, but in most cases his unconscientious or careless friends are to blame. The Bedouins often quarrel as to the original wording of the verses and frequently ask the poet himself about this, but even he is not always absolutely sure. Often the poet insists that a verse was at first worded in such and such a way, but his friends contradict him. This makes him exclaim that all the versions are good and original, and he ends by appealing to the omniscience of Allâh. After hearing this answer from a number of poets, I gave up the search for the original wording, as the task is not only most difficult but quite useless. At other times I found that the poet himself knew barely the first few verses of his own poem. The rest he had forgotten and was glad that his friends remembered more than he. Only poems dealing with subjects of common interest become widely known and are preserved, whereas poems describing particular events are recited only by the persons concerned and fall into oblivion when these persons are dead.

[181] It cannot be denied that the Bedouins are poetically gifted. The composing of all kinds of ditties and songs is mere play to them, and they do not hesitate even at longer poems. They also hold that the words used in a poem must be out of the ordinary, not those heard in common everyday life. The more unusual words the Bedouin can put into his composition, the better he thinks it. The poet therefore revises every verse most painstakingly, repeats it many times, substitutes some words for others, and asks the opinion of his friends before producing his poem.

The Rwejli always explains the reason or occasion of the origin of every poem, believing that the poet had some motive for its composition. Often he forms his own opinion as to the origin of some old poem simply from its contents and is firmly convinced that he is not mistaken, and yet no one but the poet himself could say what induced him to compose it.

2:Musil S-4, 5 (no date)1928 MD4 Rwala MD4

Genuine Bliss Dwells with All True Believers

1. *Aṭ-ṭib mâ hw bass ma' az-za'ânina*
   mužassem 'ala rûs al-'ejâl al-mefâliḥ
2. *bejt aš-ša'ar w-alli ḳa'ad leh bṭina*
   al-ḥazar w-al-bedwân min habb leh rîḥ.

1. Not with those only is bliss found who load tents and their fixtures on camels,
   But it is distributed also on the heads of those poor sons
2. Who live in tents of goat's hair or in the mud-brick huts,
   On settlers, on Bedouins, and on all on whom the wind blows.

The poet was an unknown orthodox Moslem; the reciter, Ǧwâd al-'Âni. It is a firm belief of the Rwala that honesty and, hence, both physical and spiritual welfare are to be found with them only. All the settlers from the ruler down to the slave are, in their opinion, nothing but hypocrites and full of low cunning, who misuse for their own benefit the religion as well as the power with which they are entrusted and who are a torment alike to the stranger and to themselves. For the Bedouins cannot understand why the settlers should be so eager to acquire both property and honors. A Bedouin's heart never longs for such vanities, for he knows that he may lose his life, the most treasured possession he has. Why, then, should he depend on riches and worldly dignities? The passionate hunt for wealth is, in the opinion of a Bedouin, the root of all the troubles and want of integrity among the settlers. Moreover, because the settlers are true Moslems while among the Bedouins Islam does not carry conviction, the latter consider Islam weak, as it cannot free the settlers from their miseries. In the two verses cited above the correctness of such Bedouin views is denied by an orthodox Moslem, who maintains that genuine bliss dwells with all true believers, *mefâliḥ* — that is, with people who live and act in accordance with their inner religious convictions. 2. *Habb leh rîḥ* would mean with a Bedouin: "success or luck is blowing towards him"; to the settled Moslem it means anyone on whom a wind blows or who breathes, hence all men without distinction.

2:Musil S-4, 5 (no date) 1928 MD4 Rwala MD4

CHAPTER XXI

WAR AND PEACE

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The Rwala are ever at war with one tribe or another. Without war a Rwejli could not live. War gives him an opportunity of displaying his cunning, endurance, and courage. He neither loves the shedding of blood, nor craves booty, but is allured by danger and delights in the predatory art. The booty itself he will give away without thinking much about it — even to the wife of the very man he has just robbed. Some tribes, not always entire strangers, hate each other cordially. Between them peace is never of long duration. Despite the greatest efforts of the chiefs to prevent war, their people continue to attack and destroy one another. With the tribes settled along the desert borders and fully subject to the Government, peace is never concluded. If the Government, which is supposed to protect them, is weak, the Rwala despoil them whenever they are so inclined. The more distant the pastures of two tribes are, the longer will the war between them last.

DECLARATIONS OF WAR

721

The causes of war are, as a rule, petty thefts and the capturing of stray animals. The individual tribesmen begin to accuse each other of harboring stolen she-camels, *nakâjes*. Then they call on their chiefs for help. Couriers ride from tribe to tribe with verbal and written messages. Evidently both tribes desire war. Finally the chief of one tribe sends to the chief of the other a letter worded somewhat as follows:

"To the well-born, highly honored brother, Chief So-and-So! May Allâh preserve his good name! Amen. Extending our greetings and entreating Allâh's mercy and blessing for you, we announce to you that your Arabs are harassing our people and robbing them of their property continually without any effort on your part to put a stop to it. From this we judge that it happens with your assent. We now demand that you return without delay the stolen camels. If you refuse, you are, behold! hereby deprived of your fair name, *maǧrûd an-neḳa'*